

COUNTRY Indochina, Siam  
SUBJECT Viet Minh Propaganda

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1. During the Japanese occupation of Indochina, Viet Minh propaganda was extraordinarily skillful and convincing. During the period of the Provisional Government (September 1945-March 1946) the Minister of Propaganda was Tran Huy Lieu. While the Viet Minh propaganda at this time was not as skillful as it had been during the Japanese occupation, it was still excellent. After March 1946 the Ministry of Propaganda was abolished and its functions divided. Luu Van Loi was Director of Censorship and Press Relations (under the Ministry of the Interior) and behind the scenes he was influential in matters of propaganda for foreign consumption, which were nominally under the direction of Ta Quang Buu, an Oxford graduate. [REDACTED] was at that time Under-Secretary of State for National Defense. Tran Huy Lieu was chief of the section for political indoctrination of the armed forces. [REDACTED] reported that Lieu was at that time "Political Commissar of the Armies". The joint efforts of these persons and others helping them resulted in a type of propaganda which appeared reasonable, moderate and interesting, and contained humor and light touches.
2. After the outbreak of hostilities (November-December 1946), most of the propaganda personnel remained the same. Nguyen Tan Gi Trong became chief of the section which dealt with foreign journalists. While the director of propaganda still continued to display skill and resourcefulness, the problems facing him became more acute. During 1947, Viet Minh propaganda was dedicated principally to (a) proving to foreign nations that the Viet Nam Republic is democratic; (b) proving to the Vietnamese people that it is necessary to consolidate and struggle together under Viet Minh auspices against the French and against traitors; (c) at the same time, avoiding the alienation of revolutionaries and Communists. Compromise was necessarily used increasingly as the hardships of the people increased, as the capitalists in the Viet Minh became more entrenched, as the danger of embarrassing the French Communist Party grew more immediate, and as the ultimate necessity of negotiating with the French (possibly through Bao Dai) grew more pressing. Meanwhile, by terror, imprisonment, execution or assassination the Viet Minh suppressed all enemies of the Viet Minh regime who could be reached. Those who showed too much independence of spirit were treated in the same way. It was possible /sic; ?impossible/ for propaganda to reconcile all the inescapable contradictions involved in Viet Minh political and social policy. Propaganda itself lost its light touch and became more authoritarian, but, at the same time, more vague and contradictory.
3. There have been many weaknesses and contradictions in Viet Minh propaganda regarding Bao Dai, both in propaganda from the Viet Nam Government and in that of

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the Viet Nam News Service in Bangkok. The current contradiction in the Viet Minh propaganda attitude toward Bao Dai becomes increasingly evident; pronouncements by Ho Chi Minh himself are moderate, respectful or even friendly toward Bao Dai, while pronouncements made by Ho's subordinates vary greatly. On the one hand, their pronouncements show submission and abject humility toward Bao Dai, and are moderate or neutral. Other pronouncements are violent denunciations of Bao Dai (e.g. an article titled "Bao Dai, the Unfilial Son" in Tien Len, published by the Viet Nam National Welfare Association of Youth in Udon, Siam, in April 1948. (The recent letter from Bui Bang Doan and Pham Khac Hoe to Bao Dai was written by Ho Chi Minh himself.)

In early 1948, the Viet Minh issued instructions to its Can Bos to be very discreet on the subject of Bao Dai. It is significant that this has now become a dead letter. It is an evidence of at least one crack in the discipline within the Viet Minh itself.

4. The following trends are to be noted in the English-language propaganda issued by the Viet Nam News in Bangkok:

- a. Propaganda to give an appearance of recommencement of normality and reconstruction in Viet Minh-controlled areas. Examples are meetings of scientists, inventions of new industrial processes, English courses being given, books of poetry being published, currency reforms, Congress of Administrators, Legal Administration and Press Service Congress in Bac Bo (Tonkin), meetings of Judiciary Commission, Agricultural Commission, Economic Directorates, Information and Press Service, vague claims of "reconstruction", anti-illiteracy campaign, tour of inspection by Viet Nam Minister of Justice in 2nd Military Zone, and meeting of Directorate of Social Services Bureau to make plans for 1948. This propaganda undoubtedly exaggerates the importance of such meetings, in order to give an appearance of established and smoothly-functioning government. The "Commissions" mentioned are in fact simply Can Bo who are sent by the various ministries to make enquiries in different regions; at present, the name "Can Bo" is less often heard, and the Can Bo cloak themselves with the less revolutionary appearance of governmental commissions.
- b. Frequent mention of the name of General Nguyen Binh. Next to Ho Chi Minh, Binh's name appears more frequently than that of any other Viet Nam leaders, including that of Vo Nguyen Giap, who was formerly much publicized. It is possible that this has a political significance; Binh has succeeded in getting the partial loyalty of many non-Viet Minh elements, and is a military rather than a political figure, and in this sense is less controversial than the Communist Giap. On the other hand, it may be merely because the Viet Nam News in Bangkok finds that reception from the "Voix du Sud de Viet Nam" is clearer than from the "Voix du Viet Nam" in Tonkin. It is natural that the southern radio should mention Binh more often.

5. Viet Minh propaganda in Siam, in addition to the foreign-language service of the Viet Nam News, consists of the following:

- a. Annamese-language version of the Viet Nam News. This is approximately the equivalent of the English-language version, but is more detailed. No important difference between the political tendency of the two versions is to be noted.
- b. Annamese-language bi-monthly magazine, published by the Viet Nam News.
- c. Tien Len, organ of the Youth Association, published at Udon.
- d. Doc Lap (Independence), organ of the Executive Committee of the Viet Nam Mutual Assistance Association at Udon. The Doc Lap of Udon is more like the paper Cuu Quoc in Indochina than like the organ of the Democratic Party in Indochina, also called Doc Lap.
- e. Various wall newspapers (Bich Bao), written by hand in large letters and posted on walls in public meeting places. This includes Doi Song Moi (New Life).

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organ of the Bangkok Viet Nam National Welfare Association of Youth.

6. The Annamese-language bi-monthly magazine of the Viet Nam News and the Doc Lap show no important differences in political tendency from the English-language Viet Nam News. The two Youth organs, Tien Len and Doi Song Moi naturally treat with particular detail the questions of immediate concern to members of the Youth Association.
7. These Annamese-language organs of propaganda display little skill or imagination, and their political tendencies are not usually very clear. There is little mention of world affairs, and denigration of the United States is only occasional. The reason for the lack of imagination and of serious political discussion is probably to be found in (a) the limited capabilities and static educational condition of the editors; (b) the generally repressive atmosphere, with its discouragement of free thinking, in which the Viet Minh members in Siam live.

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